

# KILLING MOON



ISSUE 2

\$3.25



FREDDIE FRANCIS

MELISSA MOORE

FRED OLEN RAY

HARVEY KEITEL

GHETTY CHASON

JIM VAN BERBER



# KILLING MOON

#2 - Summer - 1994

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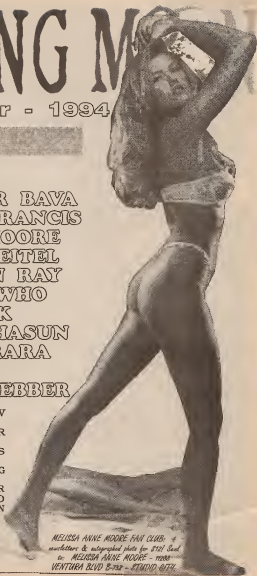
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Well, here we are again - welcome back to **KILLING MOON**, the second of hopefully many issues.

I am afraid after my furious editorial of last edition I still have a few things to get off my rather chubby chest regarding the current upheaval occurring in the U.K. over film and censorship, particularly home video censorship. As you may or may not know, the USA is lucky. Brits have one of the strictest film classification systems in the 'free' world, but this does not seem enough. For a while in April it looked like the truly horrific events of the 1982-83 were about to be repeated when

David Alton, a member of the Parliament, proposed an adjustment to the Criminal Justice Bill which would drastically alter the type of videos people would be allowed to view in their own home.

Alton's proposals meant that any film that provided children with 'an inappropriate role model' would be automatically banned. Immediately questions were raised regarding what kind of material actually provides children with 'an inappropriate role model' - **TOM & JERRY**, **LAUREL AND HARDY**, **SCHINDLERS LIST**, the definition of this phrase could mean virtually everything would be banned from videos. The April argument was all about

the psychological effect of movies on young children and I certainly agree as readers of my previous passionate editorial will remember that there is no way children aged as young as ten should be allowed to watch things like **DRILLER KILLER** or **RESERVOIR DOGS**, then again these films were never intended to be seen by young children. Psychological disturbances could be easily be caused by **JURASSIC PARK** as **ZOMBIE FLESH EATERS**, yet it is always the latter type of movie that is attacked. As I cannot reiterate enough - it is not the videos that make people violent, they can merely encourage already violent people to become more aggressive... No matter what evidence says.

Thankfully, Alton's proposals were not undertaken by the Government who instead decided to impose a further tightening of the video classification system, the revisions of which look uncertain at the time of writing, but one thing is for sure - the serious adult videos will be guaranteed less horror, violent action or thriller films in their own home as the list of film already denied video releases extended from the already in limbo - **BAD LIEUTENANT** and **RESERVOIR DOGS** to low budget British horror **BEYOND BEDLAM**, less than three weeks after the amendment. A bad sign, is to say, the least. The only good thing that comes from this new bill is that, at last, disreputable video owner who lend '18' rated movies out to underage kids will be more seriously dealt with. Why is this good? Well, at least, for once, it is not the filmmakers who are being attacked.

Anyway, I am sure I will have lots more moans and groans for you next time. Enjoy then, enjoy and keep up the fight.

Editor and writer,

ALEX J. LOW



# BRavo FOR BAVA

## THE FILMS OF MARIO BAVA

SIMON O'CONNOR

The career of Mario Bava produced a curious mixture of films that occasionally bordered on the absurd, but more often hinted at genius. His penchant for eerie, misty sets, Gothic atmosphere and striking images of death, meant he could seldom venture outside the horror genre to properly perfect his art. The occasions on which he did usually produced his weakest work and thus made him one of the most gifted but inconsistent horror maestros of the 1960s.

As a photographer Bava had worked extensively on **I, VAMPIRI** (1956) and though uncredited, directed a good deal of the film. His solo debut followed in 1960 and heralded the arrival of a major new talent. **BLACK SUNDAY** was a major break through in Italian cinema and made it clear that Hammer and Hollywood weren't the only people who could bring vampires to the screen effectively. Bava's film opens with the execution of Barbara Steele, who being a vampire is sentenced to death. Before having a steel mask nailed to her face, Steele places a curse on her brother and all his future kin, promising she will be avenged. In a couple of remarkable sequences Steele and an evil companion are resurrected two centuries later on Black Sunday - the one day each century when Satan freely walks the Earth. Steele sets about destroying her brother's offspring. **BLACK SUNDAY** received instant recognition as one of the most effective films of its kind and though now dated is worthy still of such respect. Bava's haunting visuals and rich, atmospheric sets make the film beautiful to look at. As well as establishing Bava, **BLACK SUNDAY** made Steele the queen of sixties horror and a genre legend.

Having come on the scene so impressively, it was perhaps inevitable that Bava would frequently fall below his own high standards. He did continue to impress with films like **THE EVIL EYE** (1962) and **NIGHT IS THE PHANTOM** (1963). **THE EVIL EYE** foreshadows

several of Dario Argento's later thrillers. **NIGHT IS THE PHANTOM** (also **WHAT?**) meanwhile tells the story of a sadistic count (Chris Lee) who upon returning to his father's castle, severely whips his brother's new wife after she rejects his advances. Shortly thereafter, Lee is found dead but more deaths ensue and it is feared that he has returned from the dead. Again Bava injects heavy doses of atmosphere but this film proved 'too hot' to handle for the censors. It's theme of sexual

Shortly after this came **ERIK THE CONQUEROR**.

With **BLACK SABBATH** and **BLOOD AND BLACK LACE**, Bava made two of his most significant movies both in one year. **BLACK SABBATH** (1964) is commonly hailed as one of the director's best and is a three-part anthology is hosted by none other than Boris Karloff and features the master himself in the final tale. The stories are imaginative and each unfold with the kind of style one could only

salon features a host of beautiful women who are being systematically murdered by a masked killer with a deadly metal claw. Police investigate but even they can't anticipate the twists and turns behind this murder mystery. Bava makes great use of color and lighting throughout the movie and includes some fairly graphic murders that highlight the somewhat meandering plot. Moreover, his masked and gloved maniac is a startling anticipation of subsequent movie psychos.



sadism led to it's banning in Italy and resulted in heavy cuts when released elsewhere, thus rendering it ordinary and forcing Bava to use the pseudonym John M. Old.

Occasionally Bava deviated from the horror market and dabbled in the strongman epics of the time such as **HERCULES IN THE HAUNTED WORLD**, with Chris Lee again as the villain. This proved to be the best of the **HERCULES** outings with Bava's arresting visuals exploited to the hilt.

associate with Bava. Best of all is the final story in which Karloff becomes a vampire and then preys on his loving family. His grandson dies first and is then used to lure the others to a similar fate. Tremendous atmosphere and a chilling climax round off this genuinely superb film. With **BLOOD AND BLACK LACE** (1964), Bava anticipates a future trend of horror now referred to as "Stalk 'n' Slash". Here he centers on a fashion salon run by Eva Bartok and Cameron Mitchell. The

Bava's only contribution to sci-fi came in 1965. **PLANET OF THE VAMPIRES** proved an effective and intelligent combination of sci-fi and horror with its carefully structured story and striking imagery. Investigating the mysterious planet Aura, two space crafts set down to trace the source of unknown signals. Upon landing, the crew of each ship go berserk and attack each other for no reason. The entire crew of the first ship wipe each other out but the second group survive and discover

a derelict spacecraft with the skeletal remains of aliens, whose spirits inhabit the dead bodies with the hope of conquering the Earth. On a very low budget, Bava shrouds his sets in glowing mists with colorful lighting adding surreal beauty. Bava's images here are often compared to those later seen in **ALIEN**.

Perhaps trying to broaden his horizons, Bava made an unwise attempt at humor with **DR. GOLDFOOT AND THE GIRL BOMBS** in 1966.

This absurd indulgence concentrates on a mad scientist's attempt to ignite a war between the superpowers by programming female robots which detonate when making love. Vincent Price reprises his role from **DR. GOLDFOOT AND THE BIKINI MACHINE**, but even his presence couldn't prevent this film from being an embarrassment to all concerned. With **KILL BABY KILL**, however, Bava was back on course. Here a Transylvanian village which allowed the death of a seven year old girl is haunted by the child's vengeful spirit. All the traditional Bava trademarks are present. The mist, lighting, atmosphere and arresting camera work, all woven together by the director's unique cinematic skill. This was his last proper Gothic work and certainly one of his best.

Changing pace again, Bava made the interesting **DANGER DIABLIK** 1967, based on a European comic-strip, this colorful fantasy-adventure follows the fortunes of "Diabolik", a leather-clad criminal genius. With the greatest of ease he steals money and gold, deceives the police and makes love to his assistant amid a stash of stolen bank notes. This enjoyable romp teams Bava up with producer Dino De Laurentis.

Seeking to reproduce the stylishness of giallo films like **THE EVIL EYE** and **BLOOD AND BLACK LACE**, Bava made three films in as many years which challenged his abilities in this field. The first of these was 1969's **A HATCHET FOR THE HONEYMOON** a curious offering starring Stephen Forsyth as a fashion designer

who axes brides out of his fury at being impotent with his own wife. He keeps a room full of mannequins dressed in bridal gowns and occasionally dresses in these himself. Eventually he murders his wife but she returns to haunt him from beyond. This lacks the haunting atmosphere of Bava's period horror movies but is still fairly compelling and an interesting character study. Next to follow was **FIVE DOLLS FOR AN AUGUST MOON** (1970). This

inary ability in extracting nerve-jolting thrills from irrational characters, unlikely situations and breathtakingly lavish executions. The film is virtually plotless but opens with the murder of a wealthy Countess whose death alerts a group of unsavory characters who then battle it out for inheritance of her beautiful estate in a very violent fashion. Basically it became a murderous **IT'S A KNOCKOUT**, with each character determined to eliminate the

next until one is left to claim the spoils. Along the way, a group of unwelcome teens stumble in on the scene and are despatched in a very gruesome manner. The murders are very graphic with victims stabbed, slashed, strangled, decapitated, macheted and impaled. Bava's film contains little story logic and even less character development. His set pieces, however, are absolutely stunning and allow him to paint some striking images of death. His influence on the later slasher movie fad is there for all to see and is further endorsed by the success of 1980's **FRIDAY THE 13th** - a film which owes a great deal to Bava's.

Post-production interference hindered Bava's next genre offering, **LISA AND THE DEVIL** (1972). Elke Sommer stars as a young woman intrigued by a wax dummy strikingly similar in appearance to herself. Telly Savalas then shows up, looking a lot like the devil in a painting which fascinates Sommer who soon finds herself in a weird old

mansion surrounded by bizarre characters and decaying corpses. Savalas again turns up as a lollipop-sucking butler. Learning she is the double of the owner's deceased and unfaithful lover, Sommer flees the mansion and reaches an airport. On the plane however, Savalas turns out to be the pilot. This was the film Bava made. Later on some new footage was shot showing Sommer possessed and undergoing a traumatic exorcism conducted by Robert Alda. These scenes replaced about fifteen minutes of



proved to be one of the director's lesser efforts with it's derivative story and plodding narrative. Essentially the film is a rehash of the Agatha Christie inspired movies **AND THEN THERE WERE NONE** and **TEN LITTLE INDIANS**. A group of people assemble at a coastal castle where, one by one, they are reduced in number. Only Bava's handling of the murders lifts the film above sheer tedium. He was much more successful however with **TWITCH OF THE DEATH NERVE** a year later. Here Bava demonstrates his extrac-

footage from Beva's original cut which did not feature Alida in the cast at any stage of the film. This was an all too clear attempt to cash in on the success **THE EXORCIST** (1973) and made an already confusing film completely incoherent. This new version was released in 1975 as **HOUSE OF EXORCISM** and has little to offer apart from the occasional flash of surreal imagery.

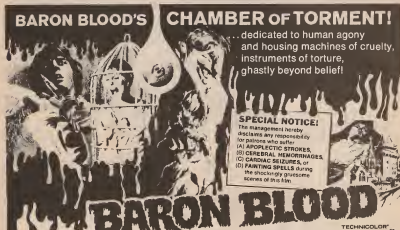
Sommer and Beva united again immediately after **LISA AND THE DEVIL. BARON BLOOD** (1972) was the result with Joseph Cotten in the title role. Cotten shows up as the evil Baron when a crumbling castle becomes the subject of a restoration plan. It seems that centuries earlier, the Baron had used this castle as the setting for sadistic sessions of torture and now disguised as a purchaser, he reacquires the ancient structure seeking to resume his gruesome activities in a fully restored torture chamber. Sommer and her boyfriend are soon in peril but justice is done when the Baron's earlier victims

rise from the dead and wreak terrible vengeance on him. Cotten is effective in the role, Sommer screams in a mini-skirt and Mario Beva shows glimpses of the Gothic touches so prominent in his earlier works.

Beva's final movie came in 1977 and starred Daria Nicolodi, wife of Dario Argento. In **SHOCK**, Nicolodi plays a woman whose late husband - a drug addict - supposedly killed himself. A mental breakdown and shock treatment have fogged Nicolodi's memory of her husband's death as she tries to rebuild her life with her young son and new husband. Weird things soon begin to happen as her son develops a habit of incessant misbehavior which starts off with him lying and playing tricks on her. As the incidents escalate and become more serious, she suspects that her son is being possessed by her late husband. This suspicion is confirmed towards the finale when Nicolodi's memory gradually returns and the violent circumstances surrounding her husband's death are revealed in

grisly detail. In a gory climax, more deaths ensue as Nicolodi is driven to hysteria by a vengeful hostile spirit. **SHOCK** is not Mario Beva's greatest movie but it does contain some of his most efficiently handled shock sequences. Several moments of terror are executed with the kind of technical superiority that could only belong to the hand of a master and these flashes of ingenuity are enough to carry the film. In the U.S.A. the film was released as **BEYOND THE DOOR II**, but it's only connections to the first installment are the possession storyline and the presence of child actor David Coln Jr.

Mario Beva's death, age 66 in 1980, signalled the departure of one of the true giants of Horror Cinema. His work has been hugely influential on modern horror trends and a great debt is owed to him by many current filmmakers. Fortunately however, Beva's spirit can still be savored in the immortal legacy he left behind on celluloid.



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# FREDDIE FRANCIS

Darren Arnold

Freddie Francis was born in 1917 in Islington, London and was an Engineering student before taking various photography-related jobs. He worked for ten years as a camera operator and was a protégé of the Powell-Pressburger partnership. He then went on to what he is known best for, cinematography, becoming especially close with the many Hammer-Amicus productions and even went on to direct numerous films for this famous production house. He is arguably the greatest cinematographer ever and has gone down in history as the only cinematographer ever to win Oscars for both a black and white and a color film. Of the countless directors he has worked with the most famous include John Huston, Martin Scorsese and Darren Lynch. He has photo-

graphed films like *THE ELEPHANT MAN*, *CAPE FEAR* (both versions) as well as *SONS AND LOVERS* and *GLORY*, for which he received his Academy Awards. As a director he has made films like *THE SKULL*, *THE TORTURE GARDEN* and *DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE*. I met up with Freddie Francis at last August's Edinburgh International Film Festival and managed to conduct a brief interview.

**KM:** Do you think a terrible film can be redeemed by good photography?

**FF:** The year **DANCES WITH WOLVES** was won the Oscar, there was another cameraman who was also nominated. Before the voting he went to see the movie and he came back and said to me "I've just seen **DANCES WITH WOLVES**, it's got sixteen sunsets." Generally, if it is a location, an exterior, people will be swayed by these things. To be honest I don't know how anyone can say "Bad film, good photography".

felt he was slightly intimidated by it all at first. Some people may have seen this as me trying to steal the director's thunder, but David knew what it was all about.

**KM:** And **DUNE**?

**FF:** Having enjoyed working together on **ELEPHANT MAN** so much, David was the sole reason I did that picture. David is great, really good fun. And quite mad.

**KM:** Can you tell me about your next project with Martin Scorsese?

be the director."

*In all the while of meeting Freddie Francis, there are several things you try and remind yourself but don't really quite sink in; namely the fact that this man has worked with a dazzling array of cinema legends (for really I should say other cinema legends, as Francis is most undoubtedly included in that bracket). You also have to remind yourself that this sprightly, energetic fellow is the grand age of 75, although at first sighting you could*



**KM:** What do you think of the current trend of many mainstream films to be 2 1/2 to 3 hours long?

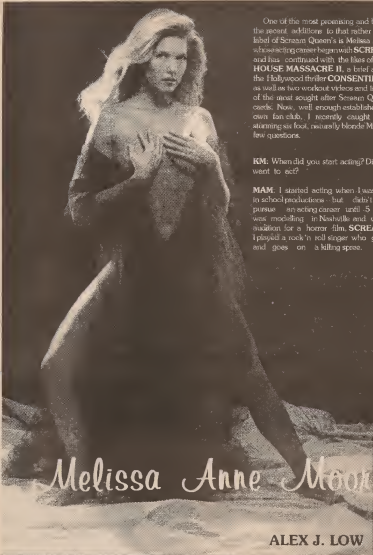
**FF:** I think films of that length are generally too long. They seem to be taking film back to the sort of lengths we were getting in the Thirties.

**KM:** Tell me about your work with David Lynch?

**FF:** David is a very good friend and I worked with him the first time he had stepped into a major film studio (**THE ELEPHANT MAN** for Brookfilms). I offered him as much help as I could as I

**FF:** Marty is the all-time film buff. The moment I met him I realized he knew every film I had directed, photographed or even operated on. One time I said to him, "I've got this beautifully written piece from a stage designer in Baltimore on the life of Edgar Allan Poe, but I don't want to spend my life trying to set up movies and raising the money." Marty said, "I think you ought to do it. I liked the thing you did on Poe". He had remembered the little piece in **THE TORTURE GARDEN** called "The Man Who Discovered Poe" while I'd forgotten it. He read the script and said "I'd love to do it - I'll be producer, you

easily estimate that he is more than ten years junior that age. Francis is a quiet modest man. For the most part he is full of praise for the people he had worked with (especially Houston, Scorsese and Lynch) and even when he occasionally does denigrate a past associate he never mentions a name. Freddie Francis is often spotted throughout the second week of the Edinburgh Film Festival, either lecturing, or informally chatting to anyone in the press area. With his neatly-pressed black suit, carefully groomed hair, impeccable manners and fine sense of humor, he is in true definition of the word, a gentleman.



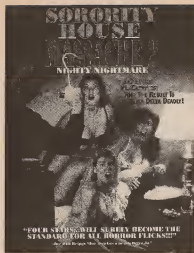
One of the most promising and beautiful of all the recent additions to that rather banal eighties label of Scream Queen's is Melissa Anne Moore, whose acting career began with **SCREAM DREAM** and has continued with the likes of **SORORITY HOUSE MASSACRE II**, a brief appearance in the Hollywood thriller **CONSENTING ADULTS** as well as two workout videos and is now on one of the most sought after Scream Queen trading cards. Now, well enough established to have her own fan club, I recently caught up with the stunning six foot, naturally blonde Melissa, to ask a few questions.

**KM:** When did you start acting? Did you always want to act?

**MAM:** I started acting when I was 6 years old in school productions - but didn't professionally pursue an acting career until 5 years ago. I was modelling in Nashville and was asked to audition for a horror film, **SCREAM DREAM**. I played a rock'n roll singer who gets possessed and goes on a killing spree.

Melissa Anne Moore

ALEX J. LOW



**KM:** Do you do your own stunts and fight sequences?

**MAM:** I do all my own stunts and fight scenes. I'm very athletic and have been trained in stuntfighting as well as karate. However, if I felt the scene would be better with a stunt double, I would be all for someone stepping into my shoes.

**KM:** How did it feel to work in the big budget thriller **CONSENTING ADULTS**?

**MAM:** It was a thrill to work with outstanding actors such as Kevin Kline, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Kevin Spacey, not to mention the amazing director Alan Pakula. It was a luxury to have the time to get every scene perfect instead of rushing because of a small budget. I was treated wonderfully and I look forward to my next big budget film.

**KM:** Did you enjoy your earlier films like **SCREAM DREAM** and **VAMPIRE COP**?

**MAM:** Of course I did. I learned so

much working on those films. They may not be masterpieces, but they helped me get started and get my foot in the door. I love acting and enjoy meeting new actors and working with them no matter what the budget of the film. I also enjoyed working with Donald Farmer, the director of both films.

**KM:** Is there anyone in particular you would like to work with?

**MAM:** A better question may be, is there anyone I wouldn't like to work with! There are too many people to name. Al Pacino, Daniel Day Lewis, Christian Slater, Geena Davis, Kathleen

Turner, Susan Sarandon, Ridley Scott, George Romero and Steven Spielberg are just a few of the many huge talents I'd like to work with.

**KM:** Of all the films you have done, do you have a favorite?

**MAM:** The most fun film I've done was **SORORITY HOUSE MASSACRE II**. I loved working with Jim Wynoski and all the actors were good. **INTO THE SUN** I'm really proud of because of it's family appeal. My best acting, however, is my latest film **KICK AND FURY**.

**KM:** What kind of movies do you personally enjoy watching?

**MAM:** I love all kinds of films - action, com-

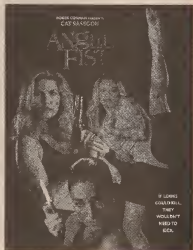
edy, horror - but there's nothing like a sloppy romantic film.

**KM:** What is your latest film, **STORM SWEPT** about?

**MAM:** **STORM SWEPT** is an erotic, horror-thriller - I guess that's what you would call it. It's about the changes that happen to six people who are trapped in a plantation house during a massive storm. The house has a strange effect on it's guests because of a rape and murder that happened there many years earlier. The actors involved are very talented, as is the director David Marsh. We still have a week of shoot left to finish the film.

**KM:** Are you currently at work on anything new?

**MAM:** At the present time, I haven't found a film I'm excited about doing, but I'm busy looking. I just finished work on a booktype magazine called "Focus" that is all about my life, career and is filled with lot of photos. So look for it around the first of November.



# HARVEY KEITEL

## O V E R V I E W

Darren Arnold

"I believe it [**BAD LIEUTENANT**] is a religious film, because hell is here now, and so is the opportunity to know heaven."

Harvey Keitel, actor, father and husband, was born in New York in 1941. His first three films were for Martin Scorsese, and because of that fact, and looking at the parts he played in those movies [**MEAN STREETS** in particular], it looked as if he was set to be Scorsese's first choice actor, rather than DeNiro, in the years ahead. He has, in fact, only starred in two other Scorsese pictures since **ALICE DOESN'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE** nineteen years ago.

However, he is arguably as good as DeNiro, if nowhere near as famous. One of the most respected actors within the film industry, he has long since been established as the star of movies by a selection of mavericks including, Nicholas Roeg, Paul Schrader, Abel Ferrara, Ridley Scott, Jack Nicholson and Dario Argento. And, of course was a driving force (both on and off screen) behind debut of the year, Quentin Tarantino's **RESERVOIR DOGS**.

After the trio of Scorsese films, Keitel appeared in a low-key picture before reemerging in the public eye with his performances in **TAXI DRIVER** and **THE DUELLISTS**. Then, as the 80s started, he went back to a series of non-starring roles for much of the decade, undoubtedly his most high profile turn being in **THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST**, putting in a performance that undeniably holds the film together, and is an image that he was later to steal heavily from in procuring his finest work.

So, to run through some of the highlights of his career. Starting with **MEAN STREETS**, here we have a film that, twenty years ago, opened up the

way for a clutch of fast-talking foul mouthed, blood drenched New York fables that tried to capture the atmosphere and vitality of the Scorsese work but failed. Even Tarantino's **RESERVOIR DOGS** has it's flaws magnified and is tramped upon something rotten when watched back to back with **MEAN STREETS**. The scale and nature of the performance given by Keitel is similar to DeNiro's in **TAXI DRIVER**. Incidentally, in both of these



Scorsese films, the starring performances given by Keitel and DeNiro were given extra substance by the fine supporting roles supplied by the other. In short, **MEAN STREETS** and **TAXI DRIVER**, with similar subtle themes of redemption running throughout both movies, give Keitel and DeNiro a stage on which to command an entire film from whilst the other stands in the background. In **TAXI DRIVER**, Keitel excels as Sport, pimp to Jodie Foster and receiver of a round of bullets from a machine gunned Robert DeNiro. Curiously,

Keitel chose the role from a range he was offered by Scorsese, and even wrote the song that he and Jodie dance to.

Moving on to the year after **TAXI DRIVER**, and Ridley Scott's **THE DUELLISTS**. Here Keitel plays a General (around the time of Napoleon) opposite Keith Carradine and Edward Fox in a typical Scott extravaganza complete with stunning visuals and extremely fragile storyline. Quite entertaining with fine performances all round, this helped first-time director Scott land **ALIEN**.

In the following years, Keitel appeared in such films as **EXPOSED** with Nastassja Kinski, Nic Roeg's psycho-sexual **BAD TIMING** and Brian DePalma's **WISE GUYS**. But without doubt his best performance of the eighties was in Scorsese's **LAST TEMPTATION** - a long, touching, dusty, bleak but ultimately uplifting telling of the Christ story that is far more relevant and sincere than it's extremely bad publicity would lead you to believe. As aforementioned, Keitel keeps the ship afloat when the weight of carrying such a huge burden in terms of scale and character gets too much for William Defoe, who nonetheless does a fine job with the role of Jesus. But it is Keitel's excellent, mature performance as Judas, the disciple and subsequent betrayer, that adds real depth to a fine picture that is always at risk of turning superficial.

Thankfully, Keitel's stand out turn, along with Defoe and the excellent Barbara Hershey, Harry Dean Stanton and David Bowie, manages to hold together a very watchable piece of work. This is the last Scorsese/Keitel project to date (Although Keitel's wife, Lorraine Bracco, put in a highly acclaimed performance beside Robert DeNiro,

Ray Liotta and Joe Pesci in **GOODFELLAS**).

1990 saw Keitel co-star with Jack Nicholson in the latter's directorial effort and sequel to Polanski's **CHINATOWN, THE TWO JAKES**. Although sorely panned by critics and public alike, there is a great deal that is worthwhile about this picture: Vilmos Zsigmond's stunning cinematography, Robert Towne's ingenious screenplay, the score by Van Dyke Parks, even Nicholson's direction. But Keitel and Nicholson are both outstanding on screen as the two Jakes of the title. Nicholson's detective, still haunted by the events of the Polanski feature, is an excellent, old-fashioned voice-over character, and Keitel manages to get a fair bit of audience sympathy as Jake Berman, who starts by cold-bloodedly murdering a man, and winds up, in a truly magnificent sequence, telling Nicholson's Gittes to leave him, as Berman lights a last cigarette as gas starts to leak from under his house.

1991 was the year Keitel burst forth in three films - the hit **THELMA AND LOUISE** (again for Ridley Scott), the so-so **BUGSY**, and the rather less than successful **MORTAL THOUGHTS**. For his part in **BUGSY**, as a clever criminal, he won an Oscar nomination, presumably be-

cause this is one of the few Academy-friendly films he has appeared in and therefore is their way of honoring his career.

In 1992 he made four films. John Badham's **THE ASSASSIN**, Emile Ardolino's **SISTER ACT**, Abel Ferrara's **BAD LIEUTENANT** and, of course, **RESERVOIR DOGS**. In fact the last three of these four mentioned were all simultaneously playing at a local six-screen cinema. Sadly, it was probably true to say that no one noticed he was gracing half the screens of this commercial cinema.

So, to **BAD LIEUTENANT**, which is without any doubt whatever his greatest performance ever, and it is doubtful anyone could have played this role better than Keitel. Depicting drug addiction, sexual frustration, outward anger, complete despair and pure Catholic guilt, this is very painful and gut-wrenching stuff to watch.

The heat and intensity of this performance is far above that of DeNiro in **TAXI DRIVER**, and the journey to redemption even more painstaking than Christ's in **LAST TEMPTATION**. The film is at once ugly and beautiful, the ugliness lying in the lieutenant's foul deeds, the beauty lying in his redemption. The horror and texture of his existence is a masterpiece created by

Keitel, director Abel Ferrara and star Zoe Lund (aka Zoe Tamerlis, writer of Ferrara's **MS. 45**) and is a depiction of finding a way out of a horror world matched only by David Lynch in **FIRE WALK WITH ME**. The two depict the beauty of redemption, which is all the more glorious following the hell that precedes it. The lieutenant takes no pride in his sins. As he admits shortly before his death, and before Jesus: "I try and do the right thing, I'm just so fucking weak." This is the height of the agony - the death that follows is like such a wonderful release. Like Christ in **LAST TEMPTATION**, the lieutenant would be well within his rights if he had said "it is accomplished". The parallel is quite stunning. That is two sets of the two films that balance out - **MEAN STREETS/TAXI DRIVER** saw him and DeNiro trade positions, and **LAST TEMPTATION/BAD LIEUTENANT** saw him switch from the betrayer of Christ to the Christ figure.

Ferrara has wrung a career-greatest turn from Keitel, like he did with Chris Walken in **KING OF NEW YORK**. So their next project together **SMOKE EYES**, in which Keitel co-stars with Madonna, should be worth waiting for. Will Ferrara/Keitel become what once looked likely for Harvey Keitel but turned into Scorsese/DeNiro? We can but hope.



# FRED OLEN RAY

ALEX J. LOW

Fred Olen Ray is a name every reader should be very familiar with as his movie output is greater than the amount of lies told by politicians. Responsible for such infamous low-budget titles as **THE TOMB**, **BAD GIRLS FROM MARS**, **EVIL**

**TOONS** and the excellent action-thriller **ARMED RE-**

**SPONSE**. Respected for working with often impossibly small budgets, Fred Olen Ray has ran his own distribution company and worked with the likes of Lee Van Cleef and John Carradine. I am pleased to say that Ray took some time out for this exclusive interview.

*Jan-Michael Vincent*  
**THE HAUNTING FEAR**



**KM:** When did you first become interested in filmmaking?

**FOR:** My first interest in actually making films was seeing an article in **FAMOUS MONSTERS** about other amateur movie makers back in the 1960s. It made me realize that this sort of thing was not beyond the reach of kids like myself - I was 13 or 14 at the time. I begged for a regular 8mm camera from some relatives at Christmas time and started making sci-fi monster films in 1968 at the age of 14. The first thing I ever filmed was a battery operated dinosaur attacking a spaceship model from **THE INVADERS** TV series. That took up one side of the 8mm spool (you had to turn them over in those days as it was actually 16mm film on the spool). The other side was used to shoot a **FRANKENSTEIN** film which featured only my brother and myself. I had to actually film myself as I reached in with my free hand to check the monster's pulse!

**KM:** What was your first film?

**FOR:** It was called **THE DEVIL GOD** and was shot on Super 8mm. It was shot but never completed. I later made **THE BRAIN LEECHES** in black & white 16mm magnetic sound-on-film using an old Auricon camera. It was the same kind of camera Andy Milligan used and the results looked about as good. The picture took advantage of the different facilities I had access to at the TV station. It was so awful I have refused to let it be seen ever since, but it was an experience that helped me about film making.

**KM:** What sort of budgets are your features usually made on?

**FOR:** All of our budgets very wildly. **ALIEN DEAD** cost a meager \$12,000. **THE TOMB** was \$185,000. **ARMED RESPONSE** \$1,000,000 etc. For a while in the late eighties we (American Independent Productions) truly went independent and financed and distributed our own line of product. We made movies like **TERMINAL FORCE**, **BEVERLY HILLS VAMP**, **BAD GIRLS FROM MARS**, **SPIRITS**, **DEMON SWORD**, **HAUNTING FEAR**, **EVIL TOONS** etc. All of those



Above: Frieda Olm Ray with Michelle Bauer and Brooke Stevens. Left: Michelle Bauer from **HOLLYWOOD CHAINSAW HOOKERS**.



pictures were made in 35mm with union actors for about \$140,000 each. In the last two years I have concentrated on directing for other producers in the \$750,000 to \$1,000,000 range budgeted picture. Films like **MIND TWISTER**, **INNER SANCTUM I & II** and **DARK IS THE NIGHT** fall into this category.

**KM:** Do you have any personal favorites of your own movies?

**FOR:** I enjoy watching **ARMED RESPONSE** the most. Past that I like **HAUNTING FEAR**, **EVIL SPIRITS** and **MOB BOSS**. I will always have a fondness for **THE TOMB**, although there is much I would have liked to do differently.

**KM:** What are your favorite movies?

**FOR:** I watch a lot of films, on video mostly as I hate going to the cinema, and tend to like older stuff. Universal monster pics and American International sci-fi from the '50s being my favorites. I think my favorite films would be **ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN** and **THE QUIET MAN**.

**KM:** From all the film-related jobs you do - writing, producing, directing - which do you like the most?

**FOR:** I think I enjoy directing the most of all. It is a constant expenditure of energy and you come in contact with every phase of the film making process. You are included (usually) in the writing, producing, editing, scoring, mixing, etc. of the film, but usually lack any kind of final control over the product and that's the frustrating aspect of working for someone else. Whoever puts up the money has the final say on how things get done.

**KM:** Do you think the "video boom" is over?

**FOR:** Yes, it has been for several years now. Companies like Tempe handle extremely low-end product and are a good way for young filmmakers to break into the market with a bonafide release, but I seriously doubt Tempe is changing the face of the declining marketplace.

**KM:** What are your feelings on the current trend of films on video?

**FOR:** The equipment used is usually of

ups, over-the-shoulder shots, inserts, crossing the line etc., seem to be an alien territory for some people and these are exactly the kind of things that separate them from the pros.

**KM:** Is there anyone you would especially like to work with?

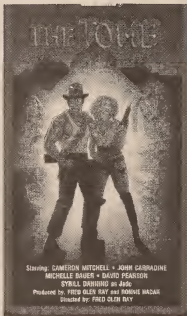
**FOR:** There are many actors I would like to work with, although I have made pictures with some of my childhood idols (John Carradine, Lee Van Cleef and Martin Landau) - I would love to work with Vincent Price and was very close on **MOB BOSS** but his health would not permit it. Christopher Lee is at the top of my list. Obviously there are stars that working with enhances your career, but I'm not as keen to deal with a Stallone or Eastwood, although I would jump at the opportunity from a strictly business point of view.

**KM:** Have you been working on anything recently?

**FOR:** This year I have made three pictures and produced one other. **INNER SANCTUM II** is a follow up to the very successful first effort. It stars Michael Noun (**THE HIDDEN**), Margaux Hemingway, David Warner and Sandahl Bergman. **DARK IS THE NIGHT** stars Shannon Tweed, Henry Silva, Chad McQueen and Turhan Bey (in his first film in thirty years). I also co-produced and co-directed **DINOSAUR ISLAND** with Jim Wynorski for Roger Corman. It stars Michelle Bauer, Toni Naples and Ross Hagen. I'm the executive producer of **BIOHAZARD**

II which stars Chris Mitchum, being shot in Orlando, Florida by Steve Lattshaw. The first two pictures are basically exotic-horror films. **DINOSAUR ISLAND** is a spoof of 1950's sci-fi dinosaur movies and **BIOHAZARD II** is a follow up to my earlier film - a sci-fi monster flick.

**KM:** Is there anything you would like  
(continued on page 30)



a poor amateur level. Likewise, the actors, lighting, music et al are not up to snuff and thus the finished product is not slick enough looking to lead to professional work. It is definitely good practise and the low budgets sometime allow more time and effort to put forth in refining the craft - however, I find most video makers tend to rush through their productions, leaving out the essentials of good filmmaking. Lack of close-





# HOLLYWOOD CHAINSAW MURDER

*11 chapters*

**They charge an arm and a leg!**



# THE MAN WHO MADE TUSK

**Veronika Tzarlin**

Although he is relatively well known in France, Paris-based cult director Alejandro Jodorowsky is virtually unknown elsewhere, except to a few devotees of his mystical, surrealist, psychological and grotesque films. His most recent work, **SANTA SANGRE** (1990), is the only one readily available on video.

**SANTA SANGRE** is definitely the most "commercial" and accessible of Jodorowsky's films. It is set in a circus, the *Circo Gningo*, which tours through an obscure Central American country (all of Jodorowsky's films are made in Mexico). The circus is run by El Gran Orgo, a huge, blond-wigged tequila-swilling American knife-thrower. This grotesque is married to Concha, the beautiful trapeze artist (owing in part to Orgo's ability to hypnotize her), but Concha has joined a religious cult, the *Santa Sangre* (Holy Blood), which celebrates in sanguine detail the martyrdom of a girl who had her arms cut off by her attackers. When the cult is destroyed, Concha returns to the circus, but still burns with the fire of a zealot. Jodorowsky, who is of Polish-Argentine descent, looks very critically at Catholicism, and Christian cultism in general, revealing its bizarre nature.

Concha soon discovers Orgo

having an affair with the voluptuous tattooed woman, and some very extreme scenes of violence soon follow. The appalling gory deaths of Concha and Orgo are witnessed by their son Fenix, the child magician.

Fenix (brilliantly played by Jodorowsky's own son, Axel) grows up in a mental ward, believing himself to be an eagle, totally dehumanized. Following a very funny sequence involving a trip to the cinema - Fenix's first contact with the outside world - Fenix discovers Concha is still alive. He escapes from the asylum and joins her.

Since she is now armless, Fenix must do everything for her, and so they create a theatrical act together.

The rest of the film deals with Fenix's oedipal problems acting as his mother's arms, particularly as Concha is fiercely jealous of any woman Fenix is interested in, and when he defies her and gets involved with women, Concha soon orders her arms to do away with the interloper. Though **SANTA SANGRE** certainly bears obvious debts to the work of Spanish director Luis Bunuel, Jodorowsky's twin interests in psychoanalysis and the Tarot are well evident here, as the film is rich in symbolism and explores both Freudian and Jungian ideas, in an entertaining and sometimes shocking way. As with all of Jodorowsky's films, **SANTA SANGRE** is very colorful and visual.

Jodorowsky's two other films available in English, **EL TOPO** and **THE HOLY MOUNTAIN** (1973) are also

highly visual, and in fact contain very little dialogue (**SANTA SANGRE** has more dialogue) and much symbolism. Unfortunately, they were made in the early 70's, and look it. If you can get past the 70's clothes and makeup, they are very rewarding.

**EL TOPO** is a pastiche of a Sergio Leone spaghetti western, but it is also a Buddhist quest. Jodorowsky himself plays the Man in Black, who ends up as a saffron-robed ascetic. The film is quite violent, and the director indulges his penchant, in the most baroque way, for populating his films with cripples,

weeder and is almost TOO visual: it is so detailed in every frame, and surprising in its development, that one viewing is just not enough. Basically, the plot involves twelve people and a magnum (Jodorowsky again) - heavy symbolism already - on a quest for the Holy Mountain to discover the secret of immortality. There are some very funny parts, and the film is not really violent, unless you count an incredibly bizarre battle between the Conquistadores and the Aztecs, as played by armies of toads and iguanas. It also features some clever satire and piss-taking of

contemporary society and the early 70's hippie movement (reminding us that the New Age ain't so new).

In the mid-70's Jodorowsky made **TUSK** which is available only in French, if at all. He also writes stories for comic books, collaborating with various artists, such as Moebius, which are not too difficult to obtain. Until the success of **SANTA SANGRE** Jodorowsky was



dwarves and other deformed people, but in a far darker way than did Fellini. He also makes some rather heavy-handed political statements about American capitalism and imperialism, but certainly the film explores spiritual and mystical ideas more incisively. **EL TOPO** is definitely one of the most unusual films ever made; there is also a (very-hard-to-find) book which was released in the early 70's. Apparently, Jodorowsky is considering making a sequel, **THE SONS OF EL TOPO**, with his three sons, all of whom have acted in his previous movies.

**THE HOLY MOUNTAIN** is even

too controversial to be able to come up with enough funding to make his diversion into many films, hence comics. Rumor has it that he is in fact working on a new film with Peter O'Toole. (Before you scoff, recall that O'Toole - as well as being in many naff films - was in the best scene of **CALIGULA**, and was in **THE RULING CLASS**, playing a loon who believed himself to be simultaneously Jesus AND Jack the Ripper) But whomever he is working with, it is certain that Jodorowsky's next film will have the same uncompromising and radical vision and devotion to exploring mystical and philosophical ideas in a lurid and highly entertaining way.

# GHETTY CHASUN

Alex J. Low

She may not be all that well known and indeed has only starred in one feature film to date, Hugh Gallagher's video movie **GOROTICA**. In that Ghetty played the deranged Carrie, a necrophiliac who steals almost fresh corpses from graveyards has her very wicked way with them before selling them onto Blake, a victim of AIDS who buys corpses for sex. This uncompromising story led to much controversy including certain magazines refusing to advertise the ambitious project. Without a doubt, the presence of Ghetty Chasun made **GOROTICA** work. She put in an impressive debut and is sexually stunning. During the course of the below interview we learn that there is much more to Ms. Chasun than appears to be the case, so I will not say anymore and let Ghetty speak for herself. This is a rare, exclusive interview with a very hard to get hold of woman



**KM:** How did you get the part in **GOROTICA**?

**GC:** I hooked up with Hugh Gallagher through my friend Donald Farmer. I had never done any video work before **GOROTICA**. I met Donald and he started coming to my performance pieces. I do performance acts with a woman partner, under the name Sister Nagster. Donald and I talked initially about some video projects that ended up falling through. One day Donald told me about a guy (Hugh) from Illinois who was making a movie in Memphis and they needed an actress. So I called, Hugh and it went from there.

**KM:** What was the filming like?

**GC:** I took a bus from Nashville to Memphis late one Friday night and arrived about 1:30 a.m. The bus was five minutes late getting in and stepping off the bus I realized I had no idea who I was looking for. I had sent a picture of myself to Hugh but I didn't know what to expect. I started scouting everyone as a possible **GOROTICA** person but after a few minutes it seemed that no one was there for me. Well, I thought "I'll go to the restroom and by that time they'll be here", but when I returned, still no sign of my party. At this point, even though it had only been ten minutes, I started getting panicky. I was thinking, "Okay, call the guy whose house you're staying at" (who turned out to be Dingo Jones, Neil in the film). There was no answer. I decided to wait fifteen minutes and if no one arrived I would call the one person I knew in Memphis. My friend Kristen who stayed with her mom and who was probably out anyhow. So I waited. Wondered. Waited. Worried. Then from around the corner pealed my smiling friend Kristen with a bunch of freaks behind her - who turned out to be the cast of **GOROTICA** - I knew right then that this was going to be really fun. It turns out that Kristen knew Dingo and his wife Kim and wanted to come surprise me. We all went for beer and then to Bushrude Gutterman's (Mex from the film) to get acquainted. We stayed up late and I slept at Dingo and Kim's place. They were really great to

put me up all weekend and made me feel comfortable. I watched a lot of shoots Saturday afternoon and we started shooting my scenes that night and kept going until six a.m. We slept a few hours and picked up Sunday afternoon through Sunday night. Monday morning we got up really early and shot all the graveyard scenes. I was done with all my scenes at that point and took off back to Nashville.

**KM:** What did you think about the controversies in the screenplay of **GOROTICA**?

**GC:** I enjoyed my first read of **GOROTICA**, thought it would be fun and I liked Carrie. My favorite part for Carrie was the monologue where her daddy, whom she despised, died and finally she felt love toward him when she kissed him in his coffin! It's odd because I did have a small reservation and it had nothing to do with fucking a dead guy. It actually concerned Blake, the character who bought Max the corpse as he was a gay man dying from AIDS, and I was afraid this might create a picture that all gay men with AIDS are fucking dead people. I thought it over for a while and decided there are freaks, psychotics, conservatives and a whole mesh of different beings in every class, race and group. Holding back because of one of those things strengthens that segregation. No special treatment!

**KM:** What would you say those who would claim you of exploiting your own sex by appearing naked and having explicit sex on film?

**GC:** I do a lot of performing acts involving nudity and sexuality. Skin is beautiful, all naked bodies show strength and, as Otto Muehl said, "Pornography is an appropriate means to cure our society of it's genital panic". What's to be ashamed of, or to find degrading, to whom??? The people who say I'm degrading women kind should lay off people who aren't afraid of their bodies and having fun. Point the questions at themselves and answer those before throwing the stones (I think Jesus said that one).

**KM:** Have you done any other video or film work?

**GC:** I hosted a video documentary by Donald Farmer and had a very, very small nude scene in an independent art film called **TUT'S SMALL BALLAD**.

**KM:** Have any other parts come from your role in **GOROTICA**?

**GC:** I have a couple of projects coming up. One of these is **SCREAMING FOR SANITY** a sequel to **TRUTH OR DARE** made in 1986 by Tim Ritter. We're shooting in Florida sometime in June. J.M. McCarthy, who co-produced **GOROTICA**, has a comic book called **CADAVERA** which he's hoping to bring to life. I'll be playing the "electrocuted anarchist". It's been going back and forth. Hopefully we'll be shooting this summer in Memphis and Mississippi. And a third long term project with Donald Farmer. It all kind of started with filming a Sister Nagster performance that deals with abuse and violence against women. The project remains untitled and is going just a bit at a time. In the story I play an abuse counselor, counseling three different women.

**KM:** What do you personally think of horror movies?

**GC:** Horror movies are great. Elna is one of my personal heroines and I remember many nights growing up with the cheesy late nights she'd host. There were also the great sequels and maniacs who wouldn't die in **HALLOWEEN**, **FRIDAY THE 13th**, **NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET**, **EVIL DEAD**, **TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE**, **HELLRAISER**. I didn't start looking into some low-budget and underground titles until I made one.

**KM:** What are your personal interests, apart from acting?

**GC:** When I'm not acting or working, I am creating with my Sister Nagster. We are a hyperactive performance duo and we have always got a project in  
*(continued on page 30)*

# SELF STYLED PSYCHO



# ABEL FERRARA

Darren Arnold

Given the tradition of the song that inspires the movie, and the generally lukewarm and well-stretched results **ODE TO BILLY JOE, CANT BUY ME LOVE, PRETTY IN PINK** etc., who better than cinematic sledgehammer and self-styled psycho Abel Ferrara to break the tradition with his shattering tale of sin and redemption, **BAD LIEUTENANT**. The fact that the film was inspired by a song (of the same title) which Ferrara wrote himself, perhaps explains why for once the film relates to the song in such precise and relevant way.

But then breaking ground is something Ferrara was doing years before **BAD LIEUTENANT**. His wonderfully titled **DRILLER KILLER** is still referred to today (quite wrongfully) as the original video nasty and in the early eighties scandal was one of the first proper films to unwittingly trigger off a wave of low-quality exploitation films that fell foul of the censorship bodies. Moving on a few years, **KING OF NEW YORK** was a brutal and untouchable fable of rival drug gangs in the big apple, a film far more violent and intense than even the best of Scorsese's "hood" pictures - as Empire magazine puts it - "Makes **GOODFELLAS** look like the Andrews Sisters".

With all this at just the tip of the iceberg, it almost goes without saying that controversy has always never been far away from Ferrara, and unfortunately it seems that even his name attached to a project can now put many

people up in arms.

Ferrara began his film making career with Anti-Vietnam shorts with Nicky St John, who to this day is still his main collaborator. A native of New York, it took until the late seventies to get his first feature film made - the aforementioned and mega-notorious **DRILLER KILLER**. This cult item, for those who don't know (and there can't be many), concerns a New York painter who, after a catalogue of personal disasters (girlfriend leaves, geek rock-band moves in next door, etc.) takes to the streets with his trusty Black & Decker, combining the more lively facets of modern art and DIY with a few choice zaps of the drill on a selection of drunks and tramps. Articles on **DRILLER KILLER** are ten a penny, so there is nothing really new to be said about this film, except that in the factual run-down of it given in the book, "Video Violence And Children" it states that a "man is apparently drilled in the back". This is quite funny, as either the guy was drilled in the back or he was not, so what is this 'apparently' business? I'm sure the man in question could tell.

Still, moving onto 1980 and **MS. 45** or **ANGEL OF VENGEANCE** moved on swiftly from **DRILLER KILLER** and started to get it's director noticed amongst the critics. The story of a rape victim turned vigilante (Zoe Tamerisi) the film marked a professional debut that was lacking in the previous feature. In **DRILLER KILLER**, Ferrara played the lead role, under the name

Jimmy Lane presumably to divert a "home movie" tag, but even so the minimal budget glared through. **MS. 45** however, was a far more polished affair, even if it was still a far cry from the main stream. At least it's lead character's violence was a lot more justified. **MS. 45** was an important film for Ferrara, because if it had slid into oblivion it could have easily spelled the end for it's director. In reality it became the basis for the financing of future projects - the next of which was **FEAR CITY**, almost five years later. This is where Ferrara reached the point in his career where he left behind improvisation in order to concentrate on hardboiled thrillers that nestled nicely into the perimeter of mainstream cinema. **FEAR CITY** starred Tom Berenger, Melanie Griffith and Billy Dee Williams, and even just the shorthand of that cast gives a fair indication of where Ferrara was heading in commercial terms anyway. This cautious venturing into Hollywood brought almost a fruitful association with Michael Mann, a director not dissimilar to Ferrara in the sense that he has worked on the edges (**THIEF, MANHUNTER**) and in the centre (**THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS**). This association resulted in Ferrara directing two episodes of **MIAMI VICE** and the pilot movie for the popular **CRIME STORY** series. Ferrara it seemed was the surely independent it was suddenly okay to employ.

**CHINA GIRL** followed, a - surprise - violent thriller, with a Romeo And



Juliet / West Side Story love affair at its centre. The director's own personal favorite of an his work, it led to an interesting tale when shown on TV. The film contains a particularly brutal knife-murder in an apartment, which, as expected, was cut for transmission. Except, in its place they screened another cut of the same scene was about 400 times as violent as the original. Even Ferrara himself was clueless as to where this cut came from!

#### 1989's **CAT**

**CHASER** was a quite brilliant thriller which even Barry Norman gave a good review to! The film is simply an entertaining throwback to the days of film noir, complete with voice over, double crossings and resident femme fatale (Kelly McGillis). The story centres around ex-Marine Peter Weller, who was a member of the crack "CatChaser" platoon in Santo Domingo. Weller now owns a Miami hotel, but certain people from his past come after him, including sweaty fat boy Charles Dunning, oily racketeer Tomas Milan (a favorite in many of Sergio Corbucci's films) and Federic Forrest, who is excellent as another ex-Maine. Weller and Forrest are excellent and a nice sense of humor prevails throughout the whole film. The film,

even though only four or five years old, is not at all easy to see these days, but it is a very good example of how thrillers should be made - chiefly entertaining and with a good cast of character actors.

The following year **KING OF NEW YORK** was released - a gorgeously-shot, well-scripted depiction of Gotham drug wars, with Frank White (Christopher Walken) controlling all the city's drug trade. Trying to stop

him is Lt. Bishop (Victor Argo) and his men. The film is a flashy, hard-hitting affair which is best viewed on the big screen, where the sequence of David Caruso cracking a bullet into his rival's head will stay with you long after the

about it. Analysis, controversy and excellent reviews have stuck with the film since it was released and it is the best thing Ferrara has done, with an explosive performance from Harvey Keitel in the lead role. Not a film for all

tastes, **BAD LIEUTENANT** is a film to be recommended with extreme caution, but if you (can) stick with it, is a rich and rewarding experience - but not, you understand, a feel-good movie. Lumbered with the dreaded NC-17 certificate in America and as yet unreleased on video in the UK, the film was made on the basis of the song and a check for \$40,000 dollars from producer Edward R. Pressman.

And so; Abel Ferrara - successful, enigmatic maverick who undoubtedly will thrill and shock audiences for years to come. Next for release is his \$20 million Warner Brothers adaptation of **INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS** simply titled **BODY SNATCHERS**, a film that laid on Warner's shelves until they resold international rights. He has just completed filming **SNAKE EYES** with



credits have rolled. Walken's best performance with supporting performances from Argo, Wesley Snipes, Caruso, Larry Fishburne and Giancarlo Esposito and an important film to consolidate Ferrara's standing of someone able to mix the extreme with the commercial with apparent ease.

**BAD LIEUTENANT** needs no introduction, and, like **DRILLER KILLER**, much has been written

Harvey Keitel, Madonna and James Russo and is also rumored to be in the works of a remake of the classic **YOJIMBO**.

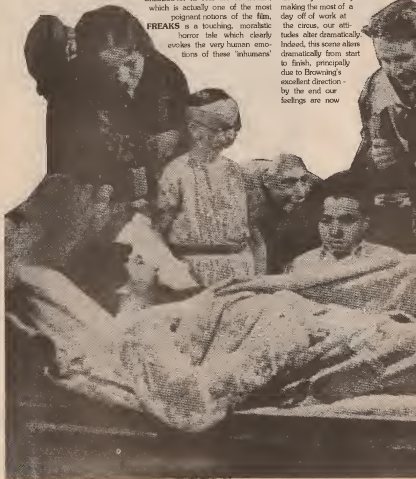
Sedly, **DRILLER KILLER**, regardless of it's merits, has become something of an albatross around Ferrara's neck, but perhaps one day he will be known, not for a "Video nasty" but for some of the best hard-edged American cinema this side of Martin Scorsese.

Tod Browning's film version of Clarence Robbins' disturbing horror story, **SPURS**, remains seldom seen and, more importantly, seldom discussed to this day. In **FREAKS** a trapeze artist, Bessie, marries the circus dwarf for his wealth and plans to murder him with poison to inherit the

money with the aid of her lover, the circus strong man. The premise is one of lust, greed and death wonderfully adapted to a circus setting where unsuspecting audiences believe there to be no such things as when they treat the kids to a day of live circus, but this 1932 classic shocked virtually everyone who saw it upon its early releases.

Criticized for its real use of 'freaks', which is actually one of the most poignant notions of the film, **FREAKS** is a touching, moralistic horror tale which clearly evokes the very human emotions of these 'inhumans'

and attempted (in many ways succeeded) to express the difficulties these people live with: love, money and determination. The first time the spectator sees the circus freaks they are almost as repulsed by the 'freaks' crawling and playing in the woods as the local squire is. However, when the women in charge of the freaks explain to him that they are merely making the most of a day off of work at the circus, our attitudes alter dramatically. Indeed, this scene alters dramatically from start to finish, principally due to Browning's excellent direction - by the end our feelings are now



ones of simplistic understanding as opposed to that of fear, apprehension, even repulsion, like they were in the beginning. Here we see that the freaks need love and attention as much, if not more than ourselves.

**FREAKS** also blatantly attacks the ignorance and unfairness of normal society through its portrayal of the human adults of the circus as being cruel, greedy and mocking of the freaks, whereas the freaks themselves will

gladly accept anyone as their friend and companion simply because they want to enjoy and get on with life as much as they possibly can. This almost uncaring attitude of the freaks toward everything is stressed with the clown (played by Wallace Ford in great form) and his girl Venus (Lola Hyams) who are the only ones to accept the freaks for what they are. Indeed the most charming and touching sequence of the whole of Browning's

masterpiece involves Venus conversing jolingly with the bearded-lady about her new born baby. The other principally emotional sequence is the wedding banquet which, coupled with the above scene and several others, lead to what we all know will be a horrific, probably tragic, ending.

The banquet sequence has been noted as a classic mise-en-scene by critics of the latter half of the twentieth century and no more fitting



**ALEX J. LOW**

a description could be given to it. To celebrate the wedding of the dwarf and the trapeze artist all the freaks are gathered at a long, narrow table, singing and drinking happily at the thought of their assimilation into normal life. Here we can all too clearly see the trapeze artist's disgust at the freaks but cannot understand, nor sympathize with her because she denies herself to see any humanity in the things she is surrounded by. It is soon after this that the dwarf's poisoning is begun and the beautiful trapeze artist and her lover become the real freaks as they are completely blinded by their own lust and greed.

The climax is one of the all-time great horror movie moments and even though it is one of the most justified scenes of revenge ever placed onto celluloid, the strongest of stomachs is still somewhat repulsed by the actions of the freaks. The end is justified but shocking.

Throughout all of the film Browning's direction is excellent - probably the best of his career and far superior to his work on Universal's *DRACULA* - but it is in this finale that his genius shines through. The lighting is eerie enough to accompany the almost silent soundtrack which almost solely consists of a deafening storm and rain. What little noise there is heightens the horror of the situation. The finale also shows us that the freaks are as capable of pure evil as any human. Mud virtually covers the screen as rain takes over and the two deceitful humans scream in utter terror realizing their mockery has brought their complete downfall. The end, in many ways, is as repulsive as the beginning.

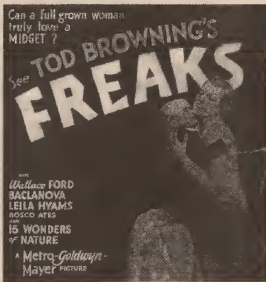
On the technical side **FREAKS** is a great accomplishment with not only Browning at his best but also cinematographer Merritt Gerstad turning in a fine job too. The strange collaboration of four screenwriters, Willis Goldbeck, Leon Gordon, Edgar Allan Woolf and Al Boasberg, comes off superbly and all leading players, especially the real-life

**FREAKS** remained banned in Britain for nearly three decades and although there was apparently a ninety-minute version, the longest available in known existence is a 64-minute print - and even this only very occasionally appears on television as it is not available on video and good 16mm prints are few and far between.

From the several different stages of its life from MGM horror to exploitation fable to genre classic, **FREAKS** has been often retitled. The most common alternative title is **FORBIDDEN LOVE**, but others are **NATURE'S BUSINESS** and **THE MONSTER SHOW FREAKS** has also influenced many films throughout the history of the industry, more recent examples being **EVEN DWARVES STARTED SMALL** (1970), Frank Henenlotter's obvious throwback to Browning's classic in **BASKET CASE 2** (1990) and the current Spanish spoof **ACCION MUTANTE** (1992), the obvious starting point of which was **FREAKS**. The film has also clearly influ-

enced the likes of Luis Bunuel, Fellini and Ingmar Bergman and deserves more than its current cult status.

Little seen since its production in 1932, the film eventually received a much deserved honor at the 1962 Venice Film Festival. **FREAKS** is without a doubt a classic horror film and remains the most outstanding of the genre-filled 1930s (on a par with **THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN**). A nightmare tale which makes more than a passing criticism on modern society and remains as effective today as it was over sixty years ago.



Original release poster - MGM had intended to outfit **FRANKENSTEIN**, but audiences were more horrified by the use of real human oddities than by the plot, and MGM came to consider it an embarrassment. This original poster had a blank area on top where each theater playing the film could personalize the poster with its own name. This idea was short-lived.

freaks, are excellent.

**FREAKS** of course was and in many ways still is, a controversial film mainly due to its very often misunderstood use of the real-life freaks as actors and indeed the film was originally shunned by its production house, MGM, who shelved the film not knowing what to do with it after the awful reception it received at previews. Later the film was handled by Dwan Esper, responsible for what was probably the first pure exploitation picture, 1934's **MANIAC**, who quite callously exploited Browning's film.

# BECKER BABBLES

ALEX J. LOW



Jim Van Bebber first came to the attention of British and European genre fans with the underground discovery of his impressive debut feature film, **DEADBEAT AT DAWN** which the popular zine "In The Flesh" called 'perfection on celluloid' a title the low-budget shocker almost certainly deserves. The gritty realism of the film and a number of fine performances from an amateur cast, including Bebber himself, make **DEADBEAT AT DAWN** one of the most atmospheric films of the eighties and the wild finale just has

to be seen to be believed. Soon thereafter, a number of equally impressive and disturbing promo's and shorts by Bebber surfaced, including the unbelievable 15-minute short **ROADKILL: THE LAST DAYS OF JOHN MARTIN** and **CHUNKBLOWER**, based on a story by the equally insane Chas. Balun. Currently trying to seek post-production funding for the ambitious **CHARLIE'S FAMILY**, a story looking at the real history of the Manson phenomenon, Bebber's career is only just beginning and it certainly looks bright.

**KM:** When did you first hold a camera?

**JB:** When I was only eight years old.

**KM:** Have you always had a desire to make film?

**JB:** As far back as I can remember. I've always drawn cartoons and before I got hold of a motion picture camera, I used to shoot snap shots and lay them out

in a storyboard manner, telling my imaginary tales that way.

**KM:** What attracted you to the horror genre in particular?

**JB:** A local television program entitled "Shock Theater", which was hosted by Barry Hobert portraying the ghoulish Dr. Creep. Every week they had a new horror film, concentrating on forbes

Universal and sixties Hammer.

**KM:** Where did the idea for **DEADBEAT AT DAWN** come from and how did you raise the money to make it?

**JB:** It came from my desire to create a gritty action film and we managed to raise the money privately from strangers.

**KM:** Was it fun to make or was it always

really hard work filming with such little money?

**JB:** Sometimes it was fun but it was always hard work.

**KM:** What do you think of the current censorship problems in the U.K.? I believe you personally met with hostility when you recently came to Britain for a film festival?

**JB:** I think it sucks! At the Scala Cinema in February, after **ROADKILL**, a young gentleman approached me and questioned my intent and my morals in a hostile manner. He told me he had been really disturbed by my film. I told him, good, that's the point and went on about my business.

**KM:** Don't you think governments and people's taxes should be tackling more important problems than fantasy film?

**JB:** Yes, of course they should.

**KM:** Will **CHUNKBLOWER** or **ROADKILL: THE LAST DAYS OF JOHN MARTIN** ever see the light of day as feature length productions?

**JB:** I don't know about **CHUNKBLOWER**, but

I hope both of them will.

**KM:** Have you been influenced by any particular film or filmmaker?

**JB:** There are many, many films and directors who have influenced me such as **LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT**, **DAWN OF THE DEAD**, **THE EVIL DEAD**, **ROAD WARRIOR** and on and on and on...

**KM:** What is happening with the excellent looking **CHARLIE'S FAMILY**, which I saw a promo for two years ago. Is it completed yet?

**JB:** We are still pursuing our post-

production funds. It is coming soon.

**KM:** Is there anyone you would especially like to work with? Would you consider making a non-genre film?

**JB:** Some sort of collaboration with Jörg Buttgeriet would be cool. Sure, I would make a non-genre film, as long as it was up to my specs.

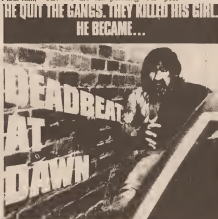
**KM:** Your films are very dark, very pessimistic. Does this reflect on your view of the world as it is today?

**JB:** Yes, they are my views on society and the world, very much so.

**KM:** What does the next year or so hold in store for you?

**JB:** Finishing **CHARLIE'S FAMILY**!!

*This brief interview with Jim Van Bebber was conducted in May, 1993 and whenever completed **CHARLIE'S FAMILY** will be receiving it's U.K. Premiere at one of Spence Hickman's **NOTHING SHOCKING** festivals. That collaboration with German horror maestro Jörg Buttgeriet sounds very interesting... Remember where you heard it first folks.*



## FRED OLEN RAY

to do in the future?

**FOR:** I would very much like to make a general audience film. Something that would be actor and story driven and appeal to

a wide group of people. It's a tough bill to fill, but I'm still out there slugging away.

*And thank God you are Fred, as without you the shelves of many video stores would be a lot bareer as Mr*

*Olen Ray is certainly one of the most prolific independent film makers working in the genre today and probably the only one in his field who can, in any way be considered an artist. Thanks for the interview.*

## GHETTY CHASUN

the works. We write, create, produce, direct, perform, publicize and finance every-

thing on our own.

*I must thank Ghetty very much for her time and patience in conducting this interview. As*

*you said Ghetty it was great fun and I hope you, the reader, enjoyed it too.*

**DEBRA LAMB**  
(Stripped to Kill 2)

**LINNEA QUIGLEY**  
(Return of the Living Dead)

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